GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3959
ANSWERED ON:23.12.2015
Rescue Operations by India
Sundaram Shri P.R.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the numbers of Indians being trapped in various countries particularly in war torn countries, are on the rise and if so, the details thereof, country-wise along with the number of Indians still trapped in these countries as on date;

(b) the number of rescue missions led by India for the evacuation of Indians and others during the past one year and the current year along with the number of people saved through such operations, country-wise and the response of the other countries in this regard;

(c) whether the Government has taken/is taking effective steps in consultation with countries for the safe evacuation of the rest of the persons trapped/held captive in these countries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the success achieved in this regard, so far?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) to (d) The Government of India regularly and closely monitors the evolving security situation in the Middle East, including in Iraq, Libya and Yemen, which had substantial Indian communities. The safety and security of our nationals in these countries is a matter of foremost concern for us. The Government has made extensive efforts to enable the evacuation of Indian nationals from war-affected countries, as per details given below:

Our Embassy in Baghdad has facilitated the return of over 7,000 Indian nationals to India till date, by providing them assistance with travel documents, immigration and departure facilities and air tickets. The Government had setup special camp offices in Erbil, Najaf, Karbala and Basra, to facilitate efficient evacuation. We have established 24 hour helplines to assist our nationals in Iraq and their concerned family members in India. The Mission is in close and regular contact with the Iraqi Government to ensure the safety and security of the remaining Indian nationals in Iraq. A group of 39 Indian nationals working in a construction company in Mosul continue to be held captive by ISIS. The Government is making every effort to secure their release.

3,600 Indians have been evacuated from Libya so far. These evacuations were facilitated through land, air and sea, with the assistance of countries neighbouring Libya. An estimated 2,000 Indians still remain in Libya. We keep a close watch on the situation in Libya and our Mission continues to make efforts to persuade the remaining Indian nationals to return to India.

The Government conducted Operation 'Raahat' in March-April 2015 for the evacuation of Indian nationals from Yemen. This was acknowledged as a successful operation by the international community. Under this operation, we evacuated 6,710 persons from Yemen, including 4,748 Indians and 1,962 foreign nationals. The Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs regularly reviewed the arrangements made in this regard. An inter-ministerial 'Standing Group for Repatriation of Indian Nationals from Abroad' was setup under the chairmanship of Secretary(East) in the Ministry of External Affairs, to coordinate and implement the evacuation plans in cooperation with the Ministries of Home, Defence, Shipping and Civil Aviation. We established a 24 hour control room and helplines in the Ministry of External Affairs. Similar helplines were also set up in our Embassy in Sana'a and a camp office was established at Djibouti. I personally travelled to Djibouti to supervise these efforts from this camp office. We also received the help of Indian railways and the concerned State Governments to provide hospitality and transport for Indians arriving from Yemen in Mumbai and Kochi, all the way up to their home towns. We continue to monitor the internal developments in Yemen.

The Government continues to keep a close watch on developments in these countries, issue advisories whenever required and engage the authorities in these countries to enable the safe evacuation of Indian nationals.